

One of Seven House Members Invited to Attend World Economic Forum on the Middle East

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) will meet with leaders of several OPEC nations this weekend while attending the World Economic Forum on the Middle East. At the forum, being held in Egypt, DeFazio will challenge OPEC leaders to engage in the free trade principles they are bound to by their membership in the World Trade Organization. Of the 13 OPEC countries, nine are members of the WTO and 4 have observer status and have applied to join the WTO.

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“The OPEC cartel continues to restrict the supply of oil, in violation of WTO rules, artificially driving up the price of fuel. Meanwhile, America upholds its promise to abide by the harmful WTO rules sacrificing American jobs and subjecting consumers to sky high prices for oil,” DeFazio said. “As a world power, we have leverage over OPEC members. Why should we continue to support the oil barons that colluded to raise the price of oil and in turn hike up prices at the pump?”

In 2001, DeFazio sent a letter to President Bush urging him to take action against OPEC under WTO rules, arguing that restricting exports leads to defacto price fixing. Under Article XI of the WTO rules, member countries are prohibited from using anything other than, “duties, taxes or other charges,” to limit imports or exports across their borders. Therefore, DeFazio argued that oil production quotas would violate WTO rules. President Bush, who will also be in attendance at the forum, did not take action on DeFazio’s letter and the WTO violation by OPEC has not been challenged. DeFazio plans to press the WTO violation at every opportunity with OPEC dignitaries. .

At the forum, leaders from more than 55 countries will come together to discuss possible future scenarios which will impact of long-term global trends, specifically with regard to the Middle East. Also in attendance will be, Egyptian President Muhammad Husnī Mubārak; King of Jordan, Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein; Pakistani Prime Minister Makhdoom Syed Yousef Raza Gilani; former Prime Minister of England, Tony Blair; Director-General of World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy; US Trade Representative, Susan Schwab; President of the World Bank, Robert B. Zoellick; Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas; Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amre Moussa; Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Josette Sheeran and Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Barham Salih. DeFazio will attend several events with these notable world leaders as one of the American representatives at the meeting.